

Southwest Region News

Team MDOT and You: Working together to move Michigan forward

Want to know more about a specific project? Contact your local Transportation Service Center (TSC).

- Coloma
(Berrien, Cass, VanBuren counties)
877-321-6368
- Kalamazoo
(Allegan, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph counties)
877-320-6368
- Marshall
(Barry, Branch, Calhoun counties)
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We're on the Web!
www.michigan.gov/mdot

I-69 construction resumes in Calhoun County

The Marshall Transportation Service Center (TSC) began construction in April on a 5.2-mile stretch on I-69 from J Drive South to A Drive North in Calhoun County. During work, one lane of traffic will be maintained in each direction. Work is scheduled to be completed by Thanksgiving 2004.

This project is the fifth consecutive reconstruction project on the I-69 corridor in MDOT's Southwest Region. Currently, 30 miles have been reconstructed, with this year's project increasing the total to 35 miles. In addition, in 1999, an eight-mile segment of I-69 received a concrete overlay from mile marker 39 (just north of I-94) to mile marker 47. The final segment of I-69 – from mile 35 to mile 39 – is scheduled for reconstruction in 2006.



US-131 repairs in Kalamazoo County under way. Dynamic Lane Merge eases congestion and promotes safety

Concrete overlay work continues on US-131 between M-43 and M-89. On Friday, June 18, the Southwest Region installed a Dynamic Lane Merge system on the project. The system is designed to encourage motorists to merge into open lanes before they encounter work-zone restrictions.

The system is currently being used on northbound US-131 and will be in effect until November 2004. The system was chosen for use on this project to help high traffic volumes (28,000 to 30,000 Average Daily Traffic) merge efficiently and safely into one northbound lane.

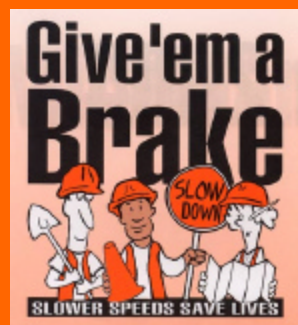
Using state-of-the-art technology, sensor signs will begin flashing once traffic volumes reach a designated level. The initial "Do Not Pass" sign will always be on, and, as traffic builds, subsequent signs will change to flashing. Once the signs are flashing, motorists who continue to drive and pass vehicles in adjacent lanes will be stopped and ticketed. Michigan State Police will be monitoring the construction site looking for drivers who do not comply with the no-passing rule.

One of the most common complaints received from drivers is other motorists moving right up to a lane closure and merging at the last second. This program is designed to eliminate the last-second merge, therefore decreasing the risk of injury for drivers and road workers alike - and to help encourage the flow of traffic.

Work is scheduled to be completed by November 2004.

The Southwest Region projects identified in the 2004-2008 Five Year Transportation Program total approximately \$264 million. These projects will upgrade more than 145 miles of the Region's 1,232 miles of roadway and improve 25 of the Region's 496 bridges.

The Southwest Region serves nine counties in southwest Michigan. This includes: Allegan, Barry, Branch, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties. Major state highways include: I-69, I-94, I-196, US-12, US-31 and US-131



The Southwest Region is the state's fruit basket, thanks to the moderating climate effect of Lake Michigan. The region is traversed by I-94, an important international trade corridor linking Port Huron and Detroit to Chicago and Toronto. This makes the Southwest Region an ideal location for many industries, particularly those supporting the automobile manufacturing industry.

Know your Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Each month, elected and appointed government officials meet with local, state, and federal transportation experts to address transportation issues in each of the urban areas. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings. The five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the Southwest Region are: Kalamazoo Area Transportation Area Study (KATS); Battle Creek Area Transportation Study (BCATS); Niles Area Transportation Study (NATS); Macatawa Area Coordinating Study (MACC); and TWINCATS (serving St. Joseph and Benton Harbor). It is through these organizations, and their locally driven process, that all roads eligible for federal funding are prioritized and budgeted to receive state and federal dollars for maintenance or improvements.

Ever wonder how a road in need of work is included in the local MPO process? The process is based on the premise that road work is largely predictable – that roads degrade at an essentially predictable rate. Thus, planning ahead is critical. Every third year, a three-year plan is developed wherein specific road projects are planned and budgeted. For each year of the three-year plan, the state and federal governments provide an estimate of funds they will make available to the MPOs. The amount allocated is estimated without knowledge of specific projects to which it might be dedicated. It is only through discussion and cooperation within the MPOs that the collection of road projects goes from a list of local “wants” to a final three-year plan for road improvements in the urban area. The state and federal allocation estimates are then apportioned for each road project and the final document is compiled and written by the MPO's staff. The resulting three-year plan is called the Transportation Improvement Program or TIP.

Upon approval by the respective policy committees, the TIP is sent to MDOT where it serves as the authoritative funding plan for that three-year span and as a fundamental component of MDOT's Five-Year Transportation Program. For more information on the MPO process, visit www.swmicomm.org.

Planning a trip?

Avoid construction delays by planning ahead with MDOT's 2004 *Paving the Way* annual construction guide. Printed copies are available at all MDOT TSCs, Region offices and Welcome Centers, or by calling the MDOT Office of Communications at 517-373-2160. The guide also can be found on MDOT's Web site at www.michigan.gov/mdot.

Additional lane closure information can be found on MDOT's Lane Closure Report at www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure.

Permits required for work in right of way

If you plan on doing any work in the right of way this construction season, remember you need a permit. Michigan State laws require the Michigan Department of Transportation to issue permits for any operations within the highway right of way, other than normal vehicular or pedestrian travel. If you're in the right of way, anything more than putting up a mailbox needs a permit. When in doubt, you should check with your local TSC and get a permit form.

Permit Form 2205, “Individual Application and Permit,” is used for all routine requests involving construction and/or occupying state trunkline for work on driveways, tree trimming, drainage, landscaping, grading, utilities, and other uses. Permit forms are available electronically at <http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/webforms/index.cfm> or by contacting your local TSC.